Journal of Scientifi c Exploration, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 293–295, 2017 0892-3310/17

Apparent Communications from an Eager Spirit - RUSSELL TARG

Elisabeth Targ

My daughter, psychiatrist Elisabeth Targ, a pioneer in the field of mind/body medical research, died July 18th, 2002, of a brain tumor at the age of 40. She was recognized as a brilliant researcher, graduating from Stanford University at age 19, with a degree in biology and a Russian Translators Certificate. She then went on to do original research in distant healing at California Pacific Medical Center. In a double-blind study with her 60 AIDS patients, those who received distant healing had significantly better outcomes, fewer trips to the hospital, fewer days in the hospital, better self-report, etc., than the controls for whom no prayers were said (*Western Medical Journal*, December1998).

Elisabeth died in the living room of my home in Portola Valley, California, overlooking Stanford and San Francisco Bay to the east. That was her request. The following day, I sat with her husband Mark Comings and my friend Jane Katra, on a deck watching the lights of Palo Alto begin to come on through the fog. We were wondering if we would ever hear from Elisabeth. Moments later, all the lights in the three-story house flashed off, leaving us in the semi-darkness. “What was that,” we all said at once. Could it be an answer to our question? At which the lights came on. A few seconds later the lights again flashed off and then on again. Such a thing never happened before or since in this five-year-old building.

A week later, Mark received a phone call from a nurse in Seattle who had taken part in Elisabeth’s distant healing experiment. She wanted to send him a letter that was dictated to her by Elisabeth. In the nurse’s dream the previous night, Elisabeth appeared to her, and strongly requested that she copy down a couple of sentences in Russian and send them to her husband Mark. The nurse spoke no Russian nor any language but English. Elisabeth told her in the dream, “I will give you the words one syllable at a time, and

you will remember them, and copy them when you wake up." Neither the nurse nor Mark had any idea what these two little "code groups" of four syllables meant. When I finally saw the letter in the nurse's blue envelope, in the kitchen of my house, I could phonetically say one line which was Russian for, "I see you." A few days later, I found a Russian speaker who told me that the second line was old-fashioned Russian for, "I adore you." If the nurse had simply spoken the English sentences to Mark on the phone, we would not be relating this story. It required the imagination of Elisabeth, who was a fluent Russian speaker, to find a unique way to communicate so as to send a message that would be understood as unambiguously from her.

A year later, Jane, who has a Ph.D. in Health Education, had an opportunity to have an interview for a teaching position at Duke University. As she relates it, she was sitting at a little round table with the department chairman and his nursing assistant, probably a Ph.D. in Nursing Education. After a few minutes of preliminaries, the nurse said that she had to interrupt for just a minute. She wanted to know if Jane knew a tall woman with long dark hair who died recently. The image of the woman was standing, very clear to her, behind Jane. Jane said yes. She knew such a person. The nurse than went on, "This spirit is very insistent. She says that she has an important message for her father, whom you know." Jane said yes. "The figure is saying that she had a message that would convince her father that she still survives. Tell my father that he should remember a time when I was a little child, and he and another person strongly forced me to wear a red dress that I didn't want to wear. It was traumatic for me. And he should remember it, too."

What had happened was that my wife Joan and I had received a very pretty red dress from my mother in New York. As a publicist, she had the idea of how sweet it would be if baby Elisabeth could meet grandma at the airport in the fabulous dress. Joan never wore dresses, and Elisabeth wasn't having any of it, and ripped it off as soon as we let her loose. Needless to say, neither Joan nor I have ever discussed this absurd moment in our early childrearing experience. Thus at the time that Jane related the story to me, a few days later, I was the only living person who had any knowledge of the embarrassing red-dress caper of forty years before. My wife Joan had died five years earlier. Notice that this case is like a nineteenth-century proxy sitting, in which a sitter goes to a medium on behalf of a third person who is entirely unknown to the medium.

I know that there are some readers who will scoff and say that this is just another case of living agent psi. But it seems to me that any instance of

ostensible survival requires some knowledgeable person to verify that the utterances or observations are correct. It reminds me of one of Ian

Stevenson's cases in which a six-year-old child was taken to the schoolhouse in another city where he claimed to have been a student a decade previously. The child was able to identify and name almost all of the children in a dusty old class picture of that time. And I have heard people assert that the child was simply reading the mind of the school master who provided the photo, and later looked up the names of the children. I propose that the two cases that I offer here are on the far side of what Steve Braude considers to be a burden of crippling complexity.